

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SENT TO D.C.

5-1-03

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name **PRODUCE TERMINAL COLD STORAGE COMPANY BUILDING**

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number **1550 South Blue Island Avenue** _____ Not for publication

city or town **Chicago** _____ vicinity

state **Illinois** code **IL** county code **031** zip code **60608**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally _____ statewide ☒ locally. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William L. Ahn 1514P
Signature of certifying official

5-1-03
Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

American Indian Tribe

Produce Terminal Cold Storage Company Building
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County, State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

_____ entered in the National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined eligible for the
National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined not eligible for the
National Register

_____ removed from the National Register

_____ other (explain):

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private

_____ public-local

_____ public-State

_____ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

☒ building(s)

_____ district

_____ site

_____ structure

_____ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

_____ 1 _____

_____ 0 _____ buildings

_____ 0 _____

_____ 0 _____ sites

_____ 0 _____

_____ 0 _____ structures

_____ 0 _____

_____ 0 _____ objects

_____ 1 _____

_____ 0 _____ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Produce Terminal Cold Storage Company Building
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County, State

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business
COMMERCE/TRADE/warehouse
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/processing
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/storage

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco
OTHER: Cold Storage Warehouse

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation **Concrete**

Roof **Bitumen**

Walls **Concrete**
Brick

other **Marble**
Terra Cotta

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Produce Terminal Cold Storage Company Building
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County, State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance **1929-1952**

Significant Dates **1929**

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation **N/A**

Architect/Builder **Henschien, H. Peter, architect**
McLaren, Robert J. architect

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Produce Terminal Cold Storage Company Building
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County, State

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

___ previously listed in the National Register

___ previously determined eligible by the National Register

___ designated a National Historic Landmark

___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

___ State Historic Preservation Office

___ Other State agency

___ Federal agency

___ Local government

___ University

___ Other

Name of repository

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property **1.5 acres**

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 16 445399 4634403 3 _____

2 _____ _____ 4 _____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

Produce Terminal Cold Storage Company Building
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County, State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title **Daniel Bluestone, Director, Historic Preservation Program**

organization **University of Virginia**

date **April, 2002**

street & number **P.O. Box 400122**

telephone **434-970-1929**

city or town **Charlottesville** state **Virginia**

zip code **22904-4122**

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:
Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name **Blue Island Development Company**

street & number **1440 West Taylor Street**

telephone **312-829-2100**

city or town **Chicago**

state **Illinois**

zip code **60607**

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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PRODUCE TERMINAL COLD STORAGE COMPANY BUILDING

7. Description

Constructed in 1928-1929, Chicago's Produce Terminal Cold Storage Company plant is an eleven-story, concrete, brick, limestone, and terra cotta building. The building's complex program originally included a cold storage plant as well as office and mercantile loft space. In contrast to the relatively plain exteriors of other cold storage warehouses, Henschien & McLaren, the building's architects, embellished the exterior of the Produce Terminal with lively Art Deco motifs. Located at the intersection of South Throop Avenue and South Blue Island Avenue, 2.5 miles southwest of downtown Chicago, the building has an overall width of 108 feet and extends 278 feet west from the street. The cold storage plant has a regular plan, measuring 108 feet by 222 feet and occupies the western section of the building. The loft and office section, with overall dimensions of 101 feet by 56 feet, on the east end of the building, is irregular in plan. This irregularity is caused by the diagonal line of South Blue Island Avenue, which creates a bevel in the southeast corner of the building. The north wall of the building's mercantile and office section is also built on a diagonal to accommodate an elevated switch track that enters the building's third floor. The building is flanked on both the north and the south sides by elevated railroad tracks. The building's exterior is predominantly concrete. A reinforced concrete structure supports a reinforced concrete curtain wall. The building retains a high degree of its original integrity. The main changes came in the last twenty years when a former building owner removed nearly all of the windows from the eastern section of the building and filled in the openings with cinderblocks. The overall form, plan, style, and integrity of the historic building is readily apparent even without the original windows. A planned rehabilitation of the building, which is now vacant, will involve the reintroduction of metal sash windows according to replacement standards established by the Department of the Interior.

Henschien & McLaren designed the Produce Terminal with a tripartite organization common in late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century skyscrapers. Incorporating the formal division of a classical column into base, shaft, and capital, the architects varied the exterior materials and design to establish three primary, visually distinct, horizontal sections along the east elevation. The first two floors, enclosed in limestone, serve as a base. The next seven floors form a uniform shaft, enclosed in concrete, and the top two floors, with their terra cotta tiles and sculpted elements appeared like an embellished capital. Both the building interior and the façade are organized into five main structural bays running north to south. On the lower two floors

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PRODUCE TERMINAL COLD STORAGE COMPANY BUILDING

the northern three bays are treated uniformly, single large window openings, now filled with cinder block, extend across the entire bay from pier to pier. The piers and the spandrels are enclosed in limestone. The building's main entrance is located in the fourth bay from the northern edge of the building. The door is recessed from the building's front plane. The fluted doorjambs, the lintel separating the door from the second floor window above, and the window itself are all enclosed in polished black marble. An octagonal shaped terra cotta tile mosaic, with an abstract depiction of foliage, occupies the lintel above the door. The fifth, southernmost, building bay has a single two-story high opening accommodating truck access to the building's interior loading dock. The bay is framed by limestone and has a rolling metal security door added in the last twenty years.

Architecturally the middle zone of the street elevation, is made up of seven uniformly treated floors. The five bays are each framed by broad, flat, concrete structural piers. Each bay has two window openings separated by a double fluted intermediate pier. The slight recessing of the window openings, the terra cotta window sills, and the spandrel panels, means that the structural piers and the intermediate piers rise continuously from the third floor to the roof, giving the building its dominant vertical expression. Indeed, the intermediate piers extend through the building's cornice forming small obelisks that accent the building's dominant vertical expression. Nearly all of the windows have been removed but originally the windows on the third floor were three pane metal casement windows. On the floors above the windows were divided into a grid of twelve panes, with two large central panes, flanked on all sides by 10 smaller panes. Two pivoting panes could be opened outwards for ventilation. The only variation in the treatment of the middle zone came in the beveled southern bay; here, the angled elevation was wider than the elevation in the other bays and was divided into four windows by a false structural pier and two intermediate piers. The concrete spandrel panels throughout the middle zone of the main elevation have a pattern of convex vertical striations scored in the concrete.

Visually the tenth and eleventh stories work together to compose the top zone of the street elevation. The density of architectural elements and ornamental patterns increases in this region giving the building its embellished crown and termination. Just below the tenth floor the concrete of the main structural piers is deeply scored, approximating the capital of a classical Corinthian column, and visually supporting the top zone of the building. In the top two floors the structural piers and the intermediate

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PRODUCE TERMINAL COLD STORAGE COMPANY BUILDING

piers both taper as they rise adding to the vertical streamlined quality of the top. On the tenth floor the four northern bays are each divided into four window opening, as opposed to the two window openings of the floors below. As in the middle zone below, the structural piers and the intermediate piers frame and divide in half each bay. The addition of two projecting terra cotta Egyptian-style colonnettes in each bay further subdivides the bays into quarters. These colonnettes in turn rise in front of the spandrel panel between the tenth and the eleventh floors where their capitals flare outwards, each visually supporting a single twelve pane window on the top floor. A zone of terra cotta chevrons that are green, white, black, and brown tops these single windows. Brown terra cotta tiles provide the wall surface between the structural and the intermediate piers on the top floor. A terra cotta dentil course and cymatium tops the street elevation. The top zone is further distinguished by a setback in the mass of the building at the beveled southeast corner. At this corner, the building is resolved into a regular ninety-degree intersection.

The northern elevation of the building is divided into fourteen structural bays, each approximately twenty-feet wide. The three eastern bays are part of the loft and office section of the building; they are built on a diagonal line recessed slightly from the eleven western bays, which make up the cold storage plant. The two easternmost bays are designed in the same fashion as the main bays on the front street elevation. Only the third through the eleventh floors are visible above the elevated railroad embankment. The next bay west has a fire escape door and a single window opening on each floor. This bay, like the others, is divided by an intermediate pier. The projecting tenth floor colonnettes are not employed in this bay. The Produce Terminal's eleven western bays on the north elevation are treated as a simple monolith. The concession to architectural treatment is apparent in the slightly projected position of the ten structural piers that are treated in a manner similar to the building's other piers; just below the tenth floor the piers are deeply scored, approximating the capitals of a classical column; the piers taper above this point, and unlike the front elevation, they terminate half way through the top floor in foliated terra cotta panels. Just below these panels there is a continuous stringcourse of terra cotta tiles. The north wall is topped with a terra dentil course and cymatium. The terminal bay on both the east and west end of the cold storage plant have steel doors at the level of the third floor, a concrete frame projects beyond the adjacent wall and piers. On the north elevation, at the level of the third floor metal sash windows fill the structural bays, providing light to the interior train loading dock. These windows are in place; however, the openings are covered with corrugated metal.

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PRODUCE TERMINAL COLD STORAGE COMPANY BUILDING

The western, or rear, elevation is the building's simplest elevation. It was initially intended to be temporary since the building was planned to extend further west. There are five structural bays. The rectangular geometry of the unadorned structural bays dominates the elevation. Red brick fills in the structural grid. The central bay on the rear elevation has doors on each floor connecting to a metal fire escape. The first floor has loading docks in the three middle bays. In the southernmost bay there is a two-story entrance connecting to the building's driveway and interior truck loading area.

The fourteen bay southern elevation duplicates the architectural design of the northern elevation. A minor departure comes from the fact that the wall is continuous between the cold storage plant and the western two bays of the loft and office section of the building. There is no setback between the two sections. There is no fire escape on this side of the building. The westernmost bay is same beveled corner bay described above in the discussion of the front elevation. Like the northern elevation, the southern elevation is not visible below the level of the third floor where it is constructed flush with the railroad embankment. At the level of the third floor a one story projecting 15 foot wide concrete wing stretches the length of the cold storage plant and serves as an exterior railroad loading dock for a sidetrack adjacent to the building. The loading dock has modern roll down doors in place.

The building is topped by two mechanical penthouses that are set back from the edge of the building, one over the cold storage plant and a second over the mercantile and office section. The steel tower that supported the building's water tank is still in place over the western end of the cold storage plant. The water tank has been removed. An 18-inch high parapet wall rises above the flat bitumen roof.

The building's main street entrance opens to a 16-foot wide, ten-foot deep foyer. West of the foyer there is a lobby that is 16 feet wide and 30 feet deep. The lobby walls are covered in green and brown terra cotta tiles and support an elaborate white Art Deco style cornice with an interlocking abstraction of foliated form topped with a zigzag chevron bracket. The lobby's terrazzo floor and terra cotta tiles provide the materials for the stair connecting the offices on the lower three floors of the building. The stair, with its wooden handrail, has metal balusters with a single stamped rectangular patterned plate over each riser. A passenger elevator also opens into the lobby. This stair and elevator core rises through the mercantile loft section of the upper floors; however, the

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stair to the loft section is not continuous with the office stair. There is also a second stair that rises in the western part of the office section that links the lower three floors; it has the same baluster pattern as the main stair, but the stairs are all concrete and the wainscot is plaster rather than tile. The office section is divided into several offices, with a combination of plaster and wood frame walls and terrazzo, wood, and concrete floors. The loft section of the building is generally unpartitioned with wood and concrete floors.

On each floor of the Produce Terminal there is direct connection back into the cold storage plant through heavy steel doors. On several floors these doors and walls have been removed. The cold storage plant is generally unpartitioned on each floor. The floors are five structural bays in width and eleven structural bays in length. Though these bays are not uniform they are generally about 20 feet on center. A grid of simple rounded structural columns with flared mushroom capitals are aligned across the cold storage plant from end to end and side to side. The concrete curtain wall is hollow and filled with cork insulation. The central bay of the five north-south bays gathers the largest concentration of refrigerating pipes that carried the ammonia gas to the cooling floors. The circulation core of four freight elevators flanked on both the east and the west by a concrete stairway with metal balusters also occupied the central north-south bay, in the third, fourth, and fifth bay from the west wall. A single freight elevator and stair core also occupies in the northeast corner of the cold storage plant.

There are several subsidiary spaces designed to support the cold storage plant. The southern bay of the first and second floors is given over to a truck driveway that reaches a concrete loading and shipping dock at the western end of the building. A railroad track occupied the northern bay of the third floor while the adjacent area provided space for handling and transferring goods in and out of storage and cold rooms located on the fourth to the eleventh floors. The basement housed the engine room with the main refrigeration plant, including ammonia compressors and brine tanks, as well as the buildings boiler room. The York Ice Machine Company provided the building's refrigeration plant, much of which is still in place in the basement.

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PRODUCE TERMINAL COLD STORAGE COMPANY BUILDING

8. Statement of Significance

Designed by the Chicago architectural firm of Henschien & McLaren and constructed in 1928-1929, the eleven-story Produce Terminal Cold Storage Company building opened as one of Chicago's most notable cold storage plants of the early twentieth century. It was recognized for its massive size, its innovative planning, design, and construction and its dramatic Art Deco embellishment. In the early decades of the twentieth century, Chicago, which styled itself "the Great Central Market," served as a major regional and national food distribution and transportation center. Due to the sheer size of its population, Chicago also developed as one of the largest food consuming cities in the country. With the invention of mechanical systems of refrigeration in the 1880s, cold storage warehouses assumed an integral role in the modern system of food distribution. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Chicago far exceeded any other city in the world in terms of cold storage capacity. H. Peter Henschien (1882-1959), a Norwegian-born architect who moved to United States in the early 1900s, was a leading expert on the design of cold storage warehouses. In 1915 Henschien published Packing House and Cold Storage Construction, which provided a "complete treatise on the design of cold storage plants."¹ The Produce Terminal Cold Storage Company building is the most important Henschien-designed building still standing in Chicago. At the time of the construction of the Produce Terminal Cold Storage Company, Henschien was associated with Illinois-born architect Robert J. McLaren (born c. 1886). Henschien and McLaren maintained their partnership for about a decade from the late 1910s till the late 1920s. The Produce Terminal Cold Storage Company meets National Register Criterion A for local significance in the area of commerce. It is an good example of a structure associated with the broad pattern of Chicago's history as it relates to the city's pivotal role in the collecting, processing, storing, and distributing food. The building also has National Register Criterion C for local significance in the area of architecture. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of the reinforced concrete cold storage warehouse type. The period of significance for the Produce Terminal cold Storage Company is 1929-1952; the terminal date corresponds with the National Register's fifty-year cut-off date.

In the early decades of the twentieth century the manufacturing, processing, storage, and transporting of foodstuffs occupied a central position in Chicago's economy. Originating in the 1880s, the development of mechanical systems of refrigeration permitted food producers to greatly extend the period of time between the

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harvesting and producing of food and its actual delivery to consumers. Cold storage warehouses helped break the market glut and scarcity cycle that was associated with production of leading food products prior to mechanical refrigeration. Many commodities raised in season had to be placed on the market immediately. Cold storage permitted the tapping and holding of surplus food, ranging from apples and bananas, to butter and cheese, to dates and cucumbers, to onions and oil, to peanuts and pears, to string beans and scallops, until times of greater consumer need, eliminating waste. The new system of refrigerated storage and transportation also meant that the collecting and distribution of foodstuffs could be further centralized. This fact combined with Chicago's dominance as a railroad and food processing hub to expand the city's importance as a regional and national market for food. By the 1920s Chicago had the largest cold storage capacity of any city in the world. In 1927, the city had over 114,000,000 cubic feet of cold storage capacity. The next largest cold storage center in the United States was greater New York which had less than half the capacity of Chicago. Chicago's meat packing industry accounted for this national dominance. In 1927 Chicago's meat packers accounted for 46% of the city's cold storage capacity; they operated over 52,000,000 cubic feet of space. Beyond meat packers public cold storage warehouses, warehouses that accepted goods for storage that they did not own or control, also loomed large in Chicago. Here Chicago ranked second behind New York with over 34,000,000 cubic feet of storage space, compared to New York's 40,000,000 cubic feet. Chicago had three times as much public cold storage capacity as the next largest American city, Boston.²

Despite the dominance of Chicago as a cold storage center and despite its dozens of cold storage plants, some new plants still caught the eye and imagination of knowledgeable observers. The sheer scale of the 1928 plans for the Produce Terminal Cold Storage Company warehouse easily attracted attention. Starting in January 1929, the United Cork Company, a manufacturer of cork for cold storage plant insulation, featured the Produce Terminal in a series of advertisements in the trade journal Ice and Refrigeration. The advertisement declared, "9,000,000 cubic feet capacity . . . eleven stories high . . . the largest cold storage warehouse in the world is now under construction at Chicago. The first unit will be completed in February. All insulation is being furnished and erected complete by United's Service."³ Readers of Ice and Refrigeration were already acquainted with plans for the "huge plant;" the journal had reported on the development in separate articles in July and August, 1928. Frank E. Roth, a 60 year old native of Ohio, the son of German parents, headed the syndicate of

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investors that backed the Produce Terminal project. In 1920, when the United States census enumerator asked Roth for his occupation he answered "cold storage promoter." In 1928, Roth, former president of Chicago's Central Cold Storage Company, undertook his biggest cold storage promotion, a cold storage plant the first unit of which would cost \$2,100,000. The plans called for a second unit that would bring the total project cost to \$4,500,000. The plant was planned to have 73.7 percent cooler storage and 26.3 percent freezer storage.

The planned size of the Produce Terminal Cold Storage Company building was unprecedented. Even after the onset of the Depression scuttled plans for the second unit, the plant stood out for its size. This single 4,000,000 cubic foot plant, as built, raised Chicago's capacity for public cold storage by nearly 12 percent. Indeed the plant as built raised the city's total refrigeration capacity by 3.5 percent. The single plant exceeded all the public cold storage space that existed in Buffalo and nearly equaled the public storage space available in Kansas City and in San Francisco. But the scale of the operation was not all that was striking about the Produce Terminal. The building appeared to be designed to accommodate a new level of efficiency in cold storage operation. Ice and Refrigeration reported: "The plant will rise eleven stories and will embrace important innovations in handling food supplies."⁴ The innovations were multiple and related both to the siting and to the actual design of the building. The building was constructed on a site wedged between the elevated tracks of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad on the north, and the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad on the south. A switch track of the Baltimore and Ohio brought train cars directly into the third floor of the Produce Terminal. An exterior siding on the south side of the building permitted Chicago and Northwestern trains to be unloaded directly into the third floor as well. An interior driveway and loading dock on the south side of the first floor permitted truck loading at a site that was off the street, avoiding congestion, and that was easily accessible to the elevators running to the cold storage floors. Another efficiency provided by the building came in its close proximity to the new center of Chicago's main produce market, located a block northeast of the building.

Another key dimension of the Produce Terminal's innovative design and organization derived from the building's hybrid nature. Unlike standard cold storage plants, which included only space for cold storage, the Produce Terminal furnished a large area that would accommodate the processing, sorting, and repackaging of some of the food held in storage. It did this by providing the mercantile loft space at the east end

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of the building. This arrangement was arrived at to effect considerable economies for produce merchants. In August, 1928, Ice and Refrigeration reported that "Considerable changes and savings in the handling of produce will result . . . from the location of the building in relation to railroads, its proximity to the new South Water Street Market, and the fact that a mercantile building will be built alongside of, and as a part of, the cold storage warehouse. This will permit products to be removed from storage, processed and returned to storage pending delivery to customers, all with no trucking expense involved, an economy both to the manufacturer and from a civic standpoint in the use of street space." This unusual arrangement of space was so novel that the journal actually reported the Produce Terminal as having "two buildings," a mercantile loft building and a cold storage warehouse, with floors simply constructed on the same level so as to promote the flow of good between one building and the other. The plan was actually even more complicated since the first three floors of loft section provided office space that accommodated the clerks and white collar employees who coordinated the vast storage, sorting, repackaging, transferring, billing, and processing operations supporting the produce cold storage section.⁵

The interest in efficiency of cold storage operation also influenced the plans for the construction of the Produce Terminal building. Henschien & McLaren's plans for the building called for a concrete curtain wall anchored into the reinforced concrete structure. The curtain wall needed an eight-inch-wide slot to accommodate the building's cork insulation. The architects and engineers adopted an unconventional building process to economize on the construction. They adopted slip form construction techniques which were far more common in grain elevator and tank construction than in the construction of cold storage or industrial buildings. Five foot high slip forms were constructed and connected to a yoke system that could raise the forms to the next section of the wall as soon as the concrete set. This process, which involved work crews working around the clock during the construction of the curtain walls, permitted the frame forms to be used floor after floor rather than having to be custom fabricated on each floor. Once the forms concrete set, which took about 8 hours in winter time the slip forms were jacked up to the next level where they received more concrete. Where there were variations in the exterior treatment the appropriate panels were braced in the wall and the sliding forms were jacked into place over them. This would have been the case, for example, when the terra cotta pier capitals were put in place on the north and south elevations. One of the engineers on the Produce Terminal project concluded after the successful use of slip forms that: "Where the volume of the work merit their

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installation, slip forms result in speed of construction, economy, and truly monolithic structures.”⁶

The attention to modern efficiency also influenced elements of the Produce Terminal project beyond the design, construction, and location. The efforts to make Chicago more beautiful and more efficient for business that framed the 1909 plan developed by Daniel H. Burnham and sponsored by the Commercial Club of Chicago shaped the urban context in which the Produce Terminal project was undertaken. The Plan advocated the rationalization and the reconfiguration of railroad, warehouse, and industrial infrastructure on Chicago’s south side. One of the elements of the plan called for the straightening of the channel of the South Branch of the Chicago River between West Polk Street and West 18th Street. This project would provide a more regular set of land parcel for the development of large-scale railroad and industrial plants. In 1926 when the City of Chicago condemned land for the river straightening project it had to compensate the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, among others for land it seized. The compensation came in the form of city land at other locations. One of the parcels given to the railroad was a vacated portion of West 15th Place and an adjacent parcel at Blue Island Avenue and Throop Street. This land, formerly part of the public right-of-way, soon became the site for the Produce Terminal.⁷

Another element of Chicago’s planning initiatives proved even more important for the development of the Produce Terminal project. The 1909 Plan inspired Chicago planners to advocate the complete removal of the extensive South Water Street produce market from the northern edge of the downtown. Drawing on a vision laid out in 1909, a 1922 Chicago Plan Commission pamphlet articulated the rationale for the relocation of the market. The Plan Commission reported: “Today South Water Street is an economic waste, insanitary, a burdensome charge on all the people, a drawback to Chicago’s progress; obstructive to its prosperity; and a conflagration danger to the whole loop district. It cannot longer remain as it is . . .destroying its own value and usefulness, damaging the entire city, congesting the streets, and seriously hampering the movement of traffic on all the north-and-south streets entering downtown.” The Commission insisted that the street had another “destiny.” It envisioned “a modern, high-class business thoroughfare, the second finest in Chicago, and the logical northern boundary of the loop district.” The realization of this vision, which became the two level roadway of Wacker Drive and its adjacent riverside improvement, simply demanded the “relocation of the produce market elsewhere.”⁸ In 1924 after resisting the relocation

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through both legal and political means, the downtown produce merchants established an organization called the South Water Street Market Trust and quietly assembled a large tract of land located at W. 15th Street and South Morgan Avenue. On this site Chicago architects Fugard & Knapp designed the New South Water Street Market, located in six neo-Classical, four-story, terra cotta buildings. The market had 166 stores for produce and commission merchants. The effects of the new market rippled outwards when the seven story warehouse at 14th Street and South Sangamon was remodeled as a cold storage plant. The construction of the Produce Terminal Cold Storage Company building, just west of the market, represented the largest area building project directed inspired by the development of the new market precinct.⁹

Just as a modern and idealized vision of the future downtown indirectly promoted the construction of the Produce Terminal, there was a distinct element of utopian modernity in the building itself. A key strain in urban utopian planning in the 1920s revolved around the ideal rationalization of traffic and circulation in the city. Plans advocated by committed urban modernists like New York architect Harvey Wiley Corbett and New York architectural illustrator Hugh Ferriss envisioned a much denser skyscraper city structured around multilevel traffic routes, separating pedestrians on elevated pedestrian bridges, from freight and passenger traffic, which occupied different roadway levels below. Basket woven intersections would keep east-west and north-south traffic moving continuously. They proposed hollowing out the basements of skyscrapers and other buildings to provide off-street loading docks, thus reducing street congestion. They also promoted taller skyscrapers, some combining office, residential, and commercial functions, to further relieve street congestion. Indeed, the Wacker Drive development, which local passenger traffic on the upper level and freight traffic and through on the lower level represented just such an urban vision. The Produce Terminal effected a similarly visionary and quite modern separation of traffic. Pedestrians entered the building from a slightly elevated sidewalk. An interior driveway provided for truck loading off of the street. Trains entered the building on the third floor level. Moreover, the efficient juxtaposition of cold storage space, with loft processing space, with office space represented the kind of efficient mixture of functions, which when combined with the infrastructure of freely flowing traffic, provided the hallmark of modern urban visions.¹⁰

The Produce Terminal's Art Deco style further underscored the building's modernity. The scored concrete pier capitals, the black marble entrance frame, the

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colorful terra cotta chevrons, Egyptian colonettes, and the terra cotta dentil courses and cymatiums that topped the buildings as well as the ornamental lobby and other embellishments perhaps seemed somewhat anomalous in a building that placed a premium on the economy and efficiency of construction and operation. Nevertheless, these forms captured important civic and commercial imperatives of cold storage operation. Public cold storage operators competed with one another for business. They thus needed to cultivate producers and commission merchants who could be impressed by business operators who appeared caught up in issues of art, as well as modern technology and efficient operation. The Produce Terminal's gesture of architectural monumentality could make the building stand out and help inspire merchant confidence and trust. Here, expenditure on elements seemingly disconnected from the business could, in the end, turn out to be good business.

Beyond the relationship with individual commission merchant and clients, major cold storage operators undoubtedly saw architectural embellishment as a useful means of cultivating broader public acceptance of the industry. The early decades of cold storage development included periods of great public suspicion and hostility. The reasons for this were straight forward enough. Cold storage facilities permitted producers and merchants to hold foodstuffs off of the market during seasonal gluts, effectively raising food prices throughout the year. When prices of various foods rose consumers and politicians at times pointed to cold storage warehouses as a site of food hoarding and market price manipulation. The ability to preserve perishable products beyond the growing season meant that producers and merchants could wait out glutted market conditions and unfavorable prices. The producers gain seemingly came at the consumers immediate expense. The broad scope of Chicago's cold storage industry did not necessarily signal broad public acceptance. In 1910, Chicago Alderman Edward F. Cullerton introduced an ordinance to regulate and inspect cold storage warehouses. The ordinance was referred to committee. A year-and-a-half later Cullerton expressed his dismay over the fact that the ordinance had "slumbered" in committee. To capture the gravity of the situation and to push the ordinance toward enactment, Cullerton declared that "A well-founded opinion prevails among a large number of the citizens of Chicago that the management of the cold storage warehouses of this city is responsible for the high prices of food handled by such concerns." Cullerton's ordinance would require that all stored goods be marked with their date of storage and would limit the storage for most good to 10 months except for butter which could be stored for 12 months. The ordinance was finally acted upon by the city council only to be vetoed by the mayor. The

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ordinance was modified and passed in December, 1912. Over the years the cold storage industry encouraged and won greater public acceptance. Nevertheless, the experience of hostility and the threats of tighter regulation provided some incentive for major cold storage operators to approach cold storage design as an opportunity to cultivate good public opinion. Handsome modern style buildings would more likely spur favorable public opinion than building featuring a bare bones utilitarianism. Henschien & McLaren designed a building that could easily have attracted public enthusiasm and favor.

The onset of the Depression shortly after the completion of its first unit forced the Produce Terminal Cold Storage Company to drop its plans for building a second unit. The building never reached 9,000,000 cubic foot capacity that had originally been planned. Nevertheless, its 4,000,000 cubic foot capacity, its modern construction and operation, and its embellished character made it one of the most notable example of early twentieth century cold storage construction. The plant operated continuously until the late 1990s when planned relocation of the South Water Street Market and changes in the economics of cold storage forced the plant to close down. The building is now vacant. The spate of demolitions of Chicago cold storage warehouses after World War II, brought about by the regional decentralization of the food storage and processing industry has increased the historical significance of the Produce Terminal Cold Storage building. Henschien & McLaren's Merchants Cold Storage and Warehouse building (1913) at South Ashland Avenue and West 41st Street and their Columbia Warehouse Company cold storage plant (1918) at South Union Avenue and West 41st Street have both been demolished. Walter W. Ahlschlager's Chicago Cold Storage Warehouse Company plant (1916) at 1526-1540 South State, which exceeded 6,000,000 cubic feet capacity, has been remodeled preserving little more than the interior structural frame. The same company's 1903 cold storage plant at 1532 S. Indiana has been demolished. Adler & Sullivan's Chicago Cold Storage Exchange Warehouse (1891), part of the original South Water Street market area, was demolished in the 1920s as part of the Wacker Drive development. Davis & Davis's George J. Cooke cold storage plant (c. 1910-1914) at 30 North Green Street has been demolished. The seven-story Monarch Refrigerating Company plant (c. 1900) at 54-60 East Hubbard has been demolished. Remodeled with exterior balconies, the North American Cold Storage Company plant (c. 1915) at 345 N. Canal Street is less architecturally interesting than the Produce Terminal plant. B. K. Gibson's fourteen-story Central Cold Storage Warehouse plant (1916) located at 350 North Dearborn Street has been demolished.¹¹

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There are a few Chicago cold storage buildings extant that provide a context for approaching Henschien & McLaren's Produce Terminal plant. The oldest surviving cold storage plant in the Chicago is Joseph W. Kepler's four story cold storage warehouse at 207 East Grand. Built in 1887 the building is historically quite significant, as a surviving example of the first generation of mechanical cold storage operations. The relatively small scale, the mill construction, the load bearing walls, and the red brick exterior reveal that the building is architecturally quite distinct from the design for the Produce Terminal plant. The 10-story Fulton Market Cold Storage plant at 1000-1010 West Fulton, designed by Gardiner & Lindberg in 1920, is more closely related to the Produce Terminal's form and design. The reinforced concrete frame, the 4,000,000 cubic foot capacity, the terra cotta details and the lines of projecting piers make the handsome Fulton Market plant in many ways comparable to the Produce Terminal. The Fulton Market plant is in excellent condition. Nevertheless, the building lacks the significant mixed-use, loft-office-cold storage, combination of the Produce Terminal. It also lacks the innovative accommodations of trucks and trains found in the Produce Terminal. Finally, the brick curtain wall and the more classical composition of the Fulton Market cold storage building make its design more architecturally and aesthetically conservative than the Produce Terminal design. The same could be said of the United States government's cold storage plant (1918-1919) built in the Central Manufacturing District at 2101 W. Pershing Road. This large plant leased by the government to the United States Cold Storage Company was designed by S. Scott Joy, the lead designer for the numerous buildings that filled the Central Manufacturing development. For this cold storage building Joy retained Henschien & McLaren, as consulting architects and engineers. The plant is in good condition and is architecturally comparable to the Fulton Market plant. Its brick exterior, its single use, and its more conservative style make it somewhat less interesting than the Produce Terminal. Joy's similar cold storage plant for the White City Cold Storage Company, located just east of the government's cold storage plant has been demolished.

This relative paucity of surviving buildings comparable to the Produce Terminal Cold Storage Company underscores the building's significance in exemplifying the cold storage building type, as outlined in National Register Criterion C. The building under Criterion A, also exemplifies the direct link to the broad pattern of Chicago history in its role as a major hub in the regional and national food processing and distribution network.

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- ¹ H. Peter Henschien, Packing House and Cold Storage Construction (Chicago: Nickerson & Collins Co., 1915).
 - ² See Edward A. Duddy, The Cold-Storage Industry in the United States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929).
 - ³ "Crescent 100% Pure Corkboard," Ice and Refrigeration, 76 (January, 1928): 14.
 - ⁴ "Begin Work on Large Cold Storage Plant," Ice and Refrigeration, 75 (July, 1928): 24.
 - ⁵ "Produce Terminal Cold Storage Co. Builds Large Plant in Chicago," Ice and Refrigeration, 75 (August, 1928): 102; "Begin Work on Large Cold Storage Plant," Ice and Refrigeration, 75 (July, 1928): 24; see also, "Cold Storage Firm Starts Work on 11-Story Building," Economist, 79 (June 30, 1928): 1601.
 - ⁶ J. D. Levin, "Slips Forms Used on Chicago Cold Storage Building," Engineering and Contracting, 68 (March 1929): 111-112.
 - ⁷ Journal of the Proceedings of the City Council of the City of Chicago, for the Council Year 1926-1927 (Chicago: City Clerk's Office, 1927), see especially proceeding for 8 July 1926.
 - ⁸ Chicago Plan Commission, South Water Street Facts, Why the Improvement Should Go Forward Without Delay (Chicago: Chicago Plan Commission, 11 January 1922), 5.
 - ⁹ "Produce Market of Chicago in New Location," Ice and Refrigeration 69 (November, 1925): 245-250; "South Water Street Market," American Fruit Grower Magazine, (January, 1925).
 - ¹⁰ See: Robert L. Duffus, Mastering the Metropolis (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1930), 72; Hugh Ferriss, Mastering the Metropolis, 1929; survey volumes of the Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs.
 - ¹¹ This information was compiled using Chicago building permits, city directories, site visits, and the Ice and Refrigeration Blue Book and Buyers' Guide (Chicago: Nickerson & Collins, 1928).

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10. Geographical Data

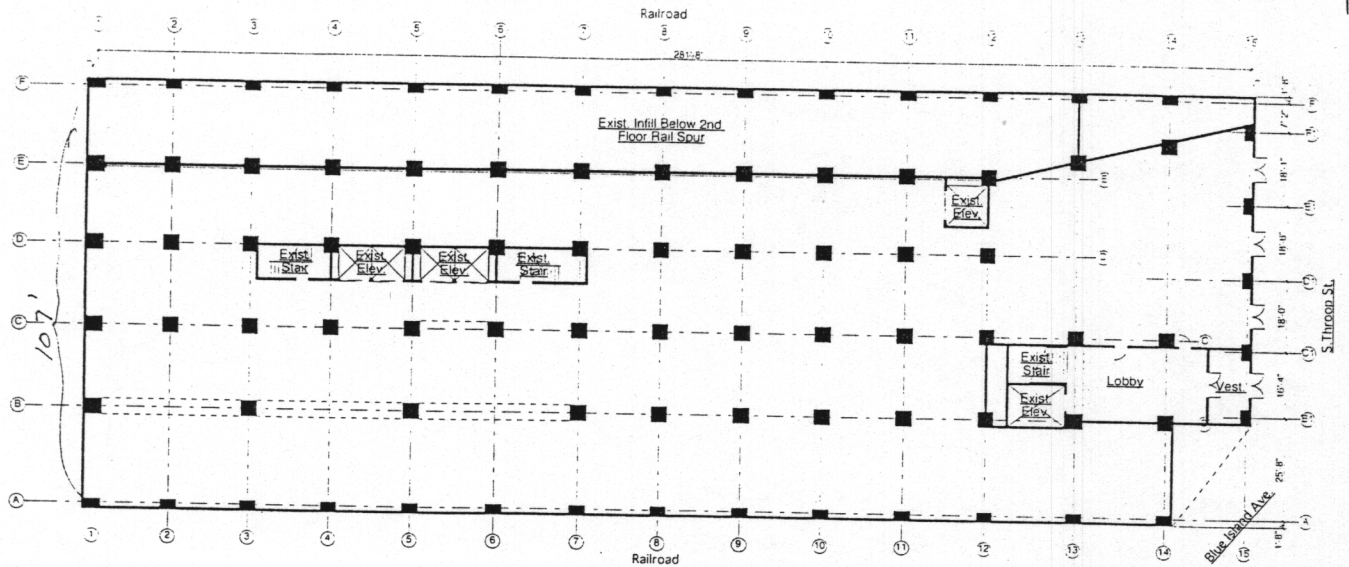
Verbal Boundary Description:

A tract of land beginning at the intersection of the north line of West 15th Place [now vacated] [formerly Rebecca] and the west line of Throop Street as show on Plat of the W. S. Sampson's Subdivision of blocks 7, 9, 10, 15 and 16 in Sampson and Green's Addition to Chicago in Section 20, Township 39 North Range 14 East of the Third Principal meridian; thence west along the north line of the said West 15th Place, 278 feet.; thence south 108 feet; thence east on a line parallel, with the north line of said West 15th Place to the westerly line of Blue Island Avenue to its meeting with the west line of said Throop Street; Thence north on the west line of Throop Street to the point of beginning, said premises being a part of block 15 in Sampson and Greene's addition to Chicago in Section 20, Township 39 North Range 14 East of the Principal Meridian, Being also a part of West 15th Place vacated by ordinance passed by the City Council of Chicago on the 8th day of July 1926, document number 9426724 in Book 233 of plats pages 35-33.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the building being nominated.

Produce Terminal Cold Storage Building



1st Floor
Existing

NOTE
This drawing is an approximation of existing conditions.
A field survey will be required to determine actual dimensions.

LISTED, 6/23/03

GEORGIA, HABERSHAM COUNTY,
Pyle--Davis House,
202 Massachusetts Bvd.,
Demorest, 03000537,
LISTED, 6/23/03

IDAHO, TETON COUNTY,
Spud Drive-In Theater,
231 ID 33,
Driggs vicinity, 99001475,
LISTED, 6/05/03
(Drive-In Theaters in Idaho MPS)

* ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,
Produce Terminal Cold Storage Company Building,
1550 South Blue Island Av.,
Chicago, 03000538,
LISTED, 6/22/03

INDIANA, CARROLL COUNTY,
Carrollton Bridge,
Carrollton Rd. across Wabash R.,
Delphi vicinity, 03000539,
LISTED, 6/22/03

INDIANA, CLINTON COUNTY,
Christian Ridge Historic District,
Roughly bounded by Prairie Cr., Young & E. Washington Sts., & Harvard Terr.,
Frankfort, 03000540,
LISTED, 6/22/03

INDIANA, JACKSON COUNTY,
Southern Indiana Railroad Freighthouse,
105 N. Broadway,
Seymour, 03000541,
LISTED, 6/22/03

INDIANA, MARION COUNTY,
Nicholson--Rand House,
5010 W. Southport Rd.,
Indianapolis, 03000542,
LISTED, 6/22/03

INDIANA, MONTGOMERY COUNTY,
Crawfordsville High School,
201 E. Jefferson St.,
Crawfordsville, 03000543,
LISTED, 6/22/03
(Indiana's Public Common and High Schools MPS)

INDIANA, NEWTON COUNTY,
Scott--Lucas House,
514 S. Main St.,
Morocco, 03000544,
LISTED, 6/22/03

INDIANA, POSEY COUNTY,
Mount Vernon Downtown Historic District,
Roughly bounded by Ohio R., 6th & Walnut Sts. & College Av.,
Mount Vernon, 03000545,
LISTED, 6/22/03